

The Journal



National Conference of Firemen & Oilers Newsletter



Organizing Win for Local 3

It took 16 long months, but in the end a majority of the 623 workers at Boston's Westin Copely Plaza Hotel voted to join NCFO Local 3 (Boston, Mass.). It was the first Boston hotel to be organized in more than 15 years. The Local will represent everyone from door-men to bartenders.

"We think it's probably the biggest organizing drive in memory," said Edward Brassil, organizing director for Local 3.

The campaign "was about dignity and respect," said John Shayeb, a Local 3 organizer.

He added, "Respect comes from having a job description and a grievance procedure with binding arbitration."

The drive was sparked when a group of employees approached Local 3 for help in organizing the hotel. They complained that they were not receiving the respect they deserved and gave the example of a recent policy change requiring bartenders to share tips with their supervisors.

Thomas Carter, a bartender who worked at the hotel for five years,

NCFO Origins Go Back 100 Years

The NCFO celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. The union will commemorate this historic event next year at the 34th regular convention in Washington, DC.

The decision to move the celebration from this August to next was made so that the maximum number of members would be able to attend the celebration. "The NCFO Executive Board felt it would be better served when more people can enjoy it," said President George J. Francisco, Jr.

said he was fired after he wrote to complain about the tip policy. "I wasn't trying to upset the apple cart, but this issue had to be addressed," he said. He added that the hotel offered him another job, but at a lower rate. With the help of Local 3, he filed an Unfair Labor Practice with the National Labor Relations Board. He won full reinstatement and \$5,749.93 in back wages.

"Local 3 provided me with the support and legal backing I needed throughout this difficult time period. It was important to know that the union was there to back me up

when I needed them. When a union gets involved, it creates a level playing field so that even a little guy can take on a big company," said Carter.

"One person can only do so much for themselves, but as a collective voice, they can all get more accomplished," said Shayeb.

"Local 3's Westin Copely Plaza win is a testament to the dedication of its entire organizing plan," said NCFO President George J. Francisco, Jr. "The NCFO will continue to fight for our members' dignity and respect on the job."

Inside The Journal...

NCFO Gets Political	2
Organizing	3
Preserving Social Security	4
Keeping the Trains Going	6
SEIU, NCFO Edge Program	7

NCFO Gets Political

Every day, elected officials at the state, local and federal levels make decisions that affect our lives as workers and the lives of our families. But even in the face of an increasingly anti-worker Congress, organized labor has been able to win political victories and defeat dangerous legislation on Capitol Hill.



It is vital we work to elect more pro-worker politicians to local, state and federal offices in order to preserve the rights that we currently enjoy, rights that pro-business interests are trying to strip away. And we must hold these politicians to their promises—that they work to enact laws favorable to our members and all working families in general.

The NCFO is entering the battle by joining forces with the SEIU to create a two-pronged attack. The first part involves working with the SEIU to create a grassroots force of Member Political Organizers, or MPOs.

While labor unions will never be able to match the huge financial resources of big business PACs, we have something more valuable—people power. Our members are dedicated to fighting for what belongs to us.

The MPO program is about building a grassroots, member-based, issues-driven program that holds politicians accountable at

every level of government. MPOs will make our voices heard. Elected officials behave quite differently when their constituents care and watch how they vote. This is what legislative advocacy is about. We must act now. We must make politics work for us. We must promote our issues by actively participating in the political process: telephoning, writing, lobbying, getting out the vote, and voting.

The second part of our attack involves revitalizing the Firemen & Oilers Political Fund (F&OPF). Raising money will allow us to support pro-worker candidates at many levels. While we don't have the deep pockets that big business has, our "people-power" combined with the F&OPF gives us an edge over the anti-worker forces.

The only way to ensure our friends are in decision-making positions is to help get them elected. With the NCFO's political program, we can achieve our goals. We won't be victorious unless we have your support at both levels. It's time to get active!

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Don't Forget to Write

Is there a question about the union you'd like the officers to address in **The Journal**?

Do you have an opinion to express on what NCFO should be doing or on an issue we face?

Send your letter—or your question—to **The Journal**, NCFO, 1900 L Street, NW, Suite 502, Washington DC 20036.

All letters must be signed and your local number and home telephone number included. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

Workers Picket for New Contract

It has been more than two years since the general employees of Riviera Beach, Fla., who are members of Local 1227 (West Palm Beach, Fla.), have worked under the protection of a labor agreement. The workers decided to publicize their plight at the January 16 Martin Luther King Parade and ask members of the public to call the City and Council.

Members lined the parade route; some displayed placards with messages and others passed out handbills. And they weren't alone. Brothers and sisters from other NCFO bargaining units in Palm Beach County, and AFL-CIO members from within the area and around the state gave up their Saturday to help the Local 1227 members.

City Using Stall Tactics

City management has continually stalled negotiations by refusing to set dates for bargaining. It tried to circumvent the union by taking this issue and others directly to City Council. And last year, the Local filed an unfair labor practice with the Public Employees Relations Committee (PERC) in a bid to force the City to bargain with its employees.

"The City continues to use stall tactics," says Sharon Munley, NCFO VP and Local 1227 Deputy Trustee. "Last December 21, the City offered the workers a zero per-



Above: Members of Local 1227 join West Palm Beach's annual Martin Luther King Parade in an effort to publicize their fight for a wage increase.

Left: A Local 1227 member sends a message to the mayor of West Palm Beach, Florida.

cent wage increase for 1997-98 and a three percent wage increase for 1998-99. We countered with a two percent and a four percent increase over two years, and a merit system in line with what other City bargaining units received." Munley

continued, "We were promised an answer before the holidays, but we still have not received any word from City officials."

Local 1227 represents more than 2,000 public workers employed at the Palm Beach County, and Glades County School Districts, and the Cities of Boca Raton, Boynton Beach, Village of Royal Palm, Delray Beach and Riviera Beach.

NCFO Members, Working Families, Fight to Preserve Social Security

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed social insurance legislation. NCFO members enthusiastically supported Social Security when it was introduced. But the President's idea of a federal social insurance program was not a new one. In 1934, Congress passed the Railroad Retirement Act which established old-age pensions for railway employees. Many NCFO members were railway workers covered under the legislation.

It is a testament to the hard work and determination of the labor movement and President Roosevelt that for more than 65 years, Social Security has provided retirement benefits for the elderly and other Americans. But now, some political leaders and special interest groups want to change the system. They are using legitimate concerns about Social Security to undermine the present system. Their idea is to create individual retirement accounts to take the place of Social Security's guaranteed, defined benefits. (See box for more information)

Social Security is not just a benefit for the elderly. It is a family protection program.

Social Security provides benefits for 6 million disabled workers and their dependents, and 7 million

survivors of workers who have died. No insurance plan on the market today can match these benefits.

Important benefits for women, minorities

Social Security's benefits are particularly important to women and minorities. The program provides the majority of the retirement income for these groups; it is the only income for 25 percent of

women 65 or older. On average, the program provides 72 percent of income for all older women. African-American women rely on Social Security for 79 percent of their income, and Hispanic women count on it for 77 percent of their income.



skjold photos

“Wall Street would not make a cent out of preserving the current system.”

—Teresa Ghilarducci, economist at the University of Notre Dame.



The program provides other benefits as well. Social Security uses a “progressive benefit formula” which means workers with low lifetime earnings get benefits that replace a higher percentage

of their earnings.

The lifetime benefit guarantee is also important for women because they have longer life expectancies than men. And the family protection features help family members—usually

Individual retirement accounts and NCF0 members

While individual accounts are being sold as a free lunch, they really come at a high price. Privatization would cost a bundle—and the burden of paying for it would be devastating to working families.

■ Initially, at least, we’d have to pay for two Social Security systems at the same time: today’s program for current beneficiaries and the privatized system. The added costs would require raising the retirement age to 70, deep cuts in guaranteed benefits, cutting or eliminating cost-of-living adjustments or some mix of these bad choices.

■ Raising the retirement age to 70 would be especially hard on workers, including many NCF0 members, who work in physically challenging jobs and workers of color. For example, many African-American men have an average life expectancy of 66.1 years so they wouldn’t live long enough to collect.

■ Privatization would cost more. Social Security spends one percent of its money on administration. The American Council of Life Insurance estimates that administrative costs for private insurance range from 12 to 14 percent. That difference gives Wall Street interests the incentive to privatize Social Security.

■ Privatization would replace guaranteed benefits with benefits dependent on

workers’ luck or skill as investors and the ups and downs of the stock market. While the stock market has performed well in recent years, stocks do fall. Since 1956 there have been nine major downturns in the stock market. Prices have stumbled by 20 percent or more for months or even years at a time. If Social Security is privatized, pray you don’t retire the day or year after a crash.

■ Privatization would mean millions in fees for banks, insurance companies and investment firms.

“This could be huge for us.”

—An executive at State Street Bank, who did not want to be identified by name.

women—who remained out of the workforce or who worked a temporary or part-time jobs or who had job interruptions for care-giving by allowing them access to benefits earned by a spouse.

What you can do:

Get in contact with your steward or local union. They are keeping track of what is happening with Social Security and will let you know what you can do to help preserve this vital program.

Keeping the Trains Going

On April 12 and 13, NCFO President George J. Francisco traveled to Nebraska where he visited Local 861 members in Alliance and Local 403 members in North Platt. Local 861 members are employed by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and Local 403 members work for Union Pacific.

He toured Local 861's shop with System Council 15 President Roger A. Burrill and Executive Board Chairman Tom Requejo. System Council 19 General Chairman Mike Williams, Vice General Chairman Jim Larreau, Local 403 President John Luna and Financial Secretary Kevin Kraning accompanied President Francisco on his tour of their shop.

"This is the first visit to these locations by a National Conference

officer," says President Francisco. "The members made me feel right at home." He also attended meetings at each Local where he answered members' questions.

The BNSF shop maintains approximately 932 locomotives and employs 667 workers. This includes 226 NCFO members, making it the largest rail local in the Conference. NCFO members pump 150,000 gallons of diesel fuel each day into an average of 138 locomotives each shift through Local 861-operated service stations and three mobile fuel trucks.

The local also operates a locomotive wash building which cleans about seven locomotives per shift. The shop is heated by a coal-fired plant operated by NCFO Stationary Engineers. Four boilers burn 1.5 tons



Local 861 (Alliance, Neb.) Chairman Tom Requejo, left, and Vice President Ron Akers, center, inspect a locomotive with President Francisco.

of coal per hour during the middle of winter equaling 56 freight-car loads of coal over the entire winter.

Local 403 has 123 members who do work similar to that of Local 861.

"The members were impressed with the visit and expressed their gratitude for his interest in their local," says Brother Requejo.

Israel Bonds labor delegate

Tom Brassil, president of NCFO Local 3 (Charleston, Mass.), recently traveled to Israel as part of a national Israel Bonds labor delegation. Israel Bonds are a major means of sustaining and solidifying ties between Israel and the American labor movement. Labor's staunch commitment to a Jewish homeland pre-dates Israel's establishment by more than 30 years.

Brother Brassil, pictured here on the right, talks labor solidarity with Yossi Harel of the Histadrut (Israel's General Federation of Labor) at the Glenn Watts Center in



Jerusalem. The Watts Center, established by the Communication Workers of America, fosters closer ties between Israeli and Palestinian trade unionists by providing trade union education, professional assistance and legal advice.

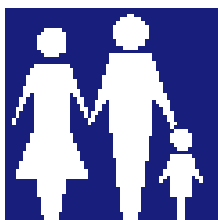
Injury-free in Chicago

Members of NCFO Local 570 (Chicago, Ill.) celebrated a full year without injury at the Chicago railroad facility. The local represents employees who work as powerhouse stationary engineers, motor truckers, diesel shop utility workers, and large equipment operators.

Local 570 President Greg Henry said "I am proud of the safety record of my fellow union members and the role that labor plays in creating a safe workplace."

Get the edge with SEIU, NCFO Edge Program

As a member of the NCFO, your union helps you negotiate good contracts and fair wages. But your benefits don't end on the job; they follow you when you're off the job.



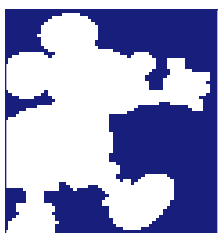
Club. Get a union-members' special room rate at the Hotel Royal Plaza in Orlando, Florida, close to Disney and other attractions. For more information, call 1-800-448-7348, M-F, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (CT).

Get the Edge!

The SEIU, NCFO Edge program is a special, member-only benefits program that puts your union membership to work for you.

Only NCFO members are eligible for these discounts and special programs. The SEIU, NCFO Edge means savings each year on consumer products and services from legal services to car repairs, from theme park discounts to home mortgages. And best of all... it's free!

Here are some examples of SEIU, NCFO Edge benefits for your summer vacation planning!



Theme Park Discounts

Discounts on admission and special vacation packages: Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom Club, Universal Studios Fan Club and the Anheuser-Busch Theme Park



Union Family Savers

Your local union membership card (or proof of NCFO membership) opens the door to union-negotiated savings for you and your family on Hertz rental cars, interstate moving rates from North American Van Lines, flower deliveries, and help selecting a college for your children. New benefits are frequently added. For more information, call 1-800-257-8352.



Union Driver & Traveler

A motor club offering emergency roadside service, towing, free maps and locksmith service; discounts on car repair services and products; and a travel program with five percent cash back on all completed domestic airline and Amtrak travel. Competitive annual membership fee; free membership for spouses and family members. To apply, call 1-800-547-4663.

FYI

The good news: the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that union membership was up by more than 100,000 last year to a total of 16.2 million. The bad news: this increase wasn't enough to keep up with an expanding workforce. So the organized sector dropped from 14.1 percent to 13.9 percent. Unions continued to do well among public employees, health

care workers, and service workers, and among African Americans and Latinos/as. They did poorly in the private sector where union membership dropped from 9.7 percent to 9.5 percent. The most heavily organized state is Hawaii with 26.5 percent of its workforce organized; the least-unionized state is Arkansas, with 6.2 percent.

Show That You're Proud To Be Union

Wear Your NCF0 Gear

**100% cotton white pique
sport shirt** (see photo)

L or XL \$23
2XL \$24

100% cotton white t-shirt

L or XL \$8
2XL \$9
3XL \$10

**100% cotton navy henley
sport shirt**

L or XL \$14
2XL \$15
3XL \$16

Solid twill cap (see photo)

\$8

Commemorative 100th anniversary NCF0 lapel pin
\$3.50

**Arctic fleece navy/jade
jacket**

(see photo)
L or XL \$52
2XL \$55

(Note: sizes run small on
jackets)

**Mens' or ladies' pad
printed wrist watch
with full color NCF0
logo and date feature**

\$100

**Customize your jacket or
shirt with your local and
city/state:**

\$6 extra

Call distributor for additional shipping and
handling charges and applicable sales tax.

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information or to request order forms:

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